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RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0124
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 0171
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 0133
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0130
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 0133
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0164
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 TASHKENT 000222

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AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL YEKATERINBURG
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI PASS TO AMCONSUL ST PETERSBURG
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL VLADIVOSTOK

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TAGS: PHUM KCRM KIRF KISL PGOV PINR PREF PREL SOCI UNHCR KG
UZ
SUBJECT: UZBEKISTAN: TRIAL OF ALLEGED RELIGIOUS EXTREMIST EXTRADITED
FROM KYRGYZSTAN

REF: a) TASHKENT 85

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CLASSIFIED BY: Richard Fitzmaurice, Poloff; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

11. (C) Summary: The trial of Haitjon Juraboev, a religious extremist suspect who was extradited by Kyrgyz authorities to Uzbekistan in September 2008, is nearing completion in Tashkent, according to an independent activist monitoring the trial. Juraboev has reportedly pled innocent to all the charges against him except one (possessing a fake Kyrgyz passport), while authorities allegedly have failed to produce any evidence to support the other charges. According to Human Rights Watch, Juraboev was granted refugee status by the UNHCR office in Bishkek shortly before his extradition to Uzbekistan. His case appears to be a continuation of efforts by Uzbek authorities to seek the forcible extradition from neighboring countries of alleged religious extremists, including those who have been granted refugee status (reftel). We also remain concerned about the complicity of neighboring governments in honoring these extradition requests. End summary.

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH REPORTS ON JURABOEV'S EXTRADITION

12. (U) In a February 6 press release, Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported that a trial had begun in Tashkent of an Uzbek refugee, Haitjon Juraboev, who was extradited by Kyrgyz authorities in September 2008 to Uzbekistan, where he was wanted on charges of religious extremism and illegal border crossing.

13. (U) HRW reported that Juraboev was the son-in-law of Obidkhan Alikhanov, an Uzbek imam who was convicted on religious extremism charges in the early 1990s. Juraboev studied Islam in the Middle East and later taught at religious schools in Russia. In 2007, Juraboev was allegedly extradited by Russia back to Uzbekistan, where he was arrested but then released without charge. Juraboev then fled to Kyrgyzstan, where he was registered as an asylum seeker by the Kyrgyz State Committee for Migration and Employment. He was granted refugee status by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) office in Bishkek on September 19, 2008, shortly before his extradition to Uzbekistan. The press release noted that Juraboev was among more than a dozen refugees forcibly returned to Uzbekistan from Kyrgyzstan since 2005.

ACTIVIST MONITORING JURABOEV'S TRIAL IN TASHKENT

14. (C) On February 20, poloff met with independent human rights activist Ismoil Adilov, who has been monitoring Juraboev's trial at the Tashkent City Criminal Court since it began on January 28. Adilov observed that closing arguments were made on February 20 and he expected that the trial would conclude soon. Adilov reported that Juraboev had been accused of being a "Wahhabist" and violating several articles of the criminal code related to religious extremism and illegal border crossing (including Criminal Code articles 223 pt I, 228 pt II, 227 pt. II, and 244 pt. II.) The Prosecutor reportedly called for Juraboev to serve a prison term of 15 years. Adilov said that Juraboev looked healthy at court and he

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has not heard of any reports of abuse

FURTHER DETAILS ON JURABOEV'S ARREST

15. (C) Adilov explained that Juraboev was stopped by Kyrgyz authorities in Bishkek shortly after visiting a local mosque on September 24, 2008. Juraboev was then reportedly held for five days by Kyrgyz authorities before being taken to a border post near Namangan, Uzbekistan, where he was given to Uzbek authorities. Adilov knew of no warrant that had been issued for Juraboev's arrest by Uzbek or Kyrgyz authorities. Juraboev's relatives in Uzbekistan were only informed of his arrest three months later.

JURABOEV HAD FAKE KYRGYZ PASSPORT, DENIES OTHER CHARGES

16. (C) According to Adilov, Juraboev admitted in court to possessing a fake Kyrgyz passport with his picture and the name of another man. Adilov reportedly denied all of the other charges against him, including being a Wahhabist. According to Adilov, authorities have not produced any evidence of Juraboev's guilt on the other charges.

17. (C) Relatives reportedly told Adilov that Juraboev planned to use the passport to visit his wife, an Uzbek currently residing in Saudi Arabia. He claimed he was unable to use his Uzbek passport as its pages were already full and he did not expect Uzbek authorities to grant him a new one. According to Adilov, Juraboev completed a graduate degree in Islamic studies in Saudi Arabia, where he specialized in the Hadith, before moving to Russia to teach at religious schools in Ufa and Chelyabinsk (Note: HRW reported that Juraboev studied in Syria, not in Saudi Arabia. We cannot explain this apparent contradiction. End note.)

POLICE HARRASSING ADILOV OVER TRIAL MONITORING

18. (C) Adilov said he had been closely watched by Ministry of Interior officers since he began monitoring Juraboev's trial last month. Police also reportedly warned him that they had launched an unspecified criminal investigation against him. Adilov is a former member of the Birlik opposition party's Central Committee and was first arrested in 1994 for organizing a public demonstration and distributing Birlik literature. He was sentenced to 6 years' imprisonment in 1999 on politically motivated charges, and was released in April 2000 during a visit to Tashkent by then-Secretary of State Madeline Albright. Adilov reported that his name remains to this day in a police log of "suspicious persons."

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ADILOV, ARDZINOV, AND IHROU

19. (C) Adilov is currently the head of the Tashkent City branch of the Independent Human Rights Organization of Uzbekistan (IHROU), one of only two registered independent human rights groups in the country (the other being Ezgulik). IHROU's national director is Mikhail Ardzinov, who used to be a serious human rights activist but now spends most of his time writing virulently anti-American screeds, multiple copies of which are sent to the Embassy on a regular basis (the latest version was entitled "7 Questions to the President of the Powerful Empire of the United States Barack Obama.") Despite his loose affiliation with Ardzinov's group, we believe that Adilov remains a dedicated human rights activist. Adilov, who admitted he was embarrassed by Ardzinov's antics, took pains to note that his organization was technically an autonomous branch of Ardzinov's group.

COMMENT

110. (C) Juraboev's case appears to be a continuation of efforts by Uzbek authorities to seek the forcible extradition from neighboring countries of alleged religious extremists, including those who have been granted refugee status. Juraboev's case is similar to that of Uzbek asylum seeker Erkin Halikov, who was extradited from Kyrgyzstan to Uzbekistan in May 2008 to face religious extremism charges and whose current fate is unknown. Several other Uzbek extremist suspects are currently facing possible forcible extradition to Uzbekistan from Russia (ref A). We remain concerned about the complicity of neighboring governments in honoring these extradition requests.

111. (C) It is impossible for us to determine whether Juraboev was actually a member of a Wahhabist sect or not, but the fact that his father-in-law was previously imprisoned on religious extremism charges, as well as his own religious study in Saudi Arabia (or Syria), might have led Uzbek or Kyrgyz authorities to suspect him of extremism activities. The government's efforts to seek extradition of Uzbek extremist suspects abroad could be aimed at silencing its critics or stamping out the potential threat of banned religious groups recruiting members from among the large population of Uzbek migrant workers in neighboring countries.

NORLAND

To view the entire SMART message, go to URL http://repository.state.sgov.gov/_layouts/OSS_SearchResults.aspx?k=messageid:04c6357d-2d18-4dc2-a7